

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 5, 2009

The Honorable Henry Waxman
Chairman
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Waxman,

Under your leadership, H.R. 3200, the "America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009," focuses on the unique health care needs of children as it strives to provide health coverage for all Americans. The legislation also provides a critical focus on ensuring that coverage will provide access to care by including several provisions to increase access and capacity in primary care. We are writing to request that you continue to consider children's health care by incorporating their most critical access issue, access to pediatric specialty care, into these provisions.

Specifically, we ask for your consideration in extending Section 1721, Payments to Primary Care Practitioners, to include pediatric specialty care. The section currently requires that Medicaid pay no less than Medicare for the same primary care services by 2012. Inadequate Medicaid payment rates for primary and specialty care often result in physicians limiting the number of Medicaid patients they will accept or not accepting them at all, which is a particularly critical issue for children. Medicaid is the single largest children's health insurance program, covering one in four children, yet on average it reimburses children's hospitals and pediatricians 30% less than Medicare would pay.

Children currently experience long wait times for many specialty care appointments, which can result in delays in care and increased emergency room use. The ability of children and their primary care providers to access specialty care when needed is a critical part of providing effective health care to American children, particularly for the growing numbers of children with chronic conditions or special health care needs.

We commend you for your commitment to expanding health care to uninsured children through the reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Program signed into law earlier this year. H.R. 3200 represents a critical next step in improving the level of health care for children. Therefore, we urge you to include the House provision regarding Medicaid primary care payment provision and to extend it to pediatric specialty care in final health reform legislation. It will make a major contribution towards ensuring that our success in expanding coverage translates into access to the right care at the right time in the right setting for our nation's children.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Mary Jo Hilary

Betty McAllen

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Tim Ryan

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